

The Future of Flight



The Next 100 Years

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Team

NASA Alumni League

Navy League of the United
States

Society of Automotive
Engineers

February 5, 2003

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable George Allen
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Dodd and Senator Allen:

As leaders in the nation's aerospace, aviation and aeronautics community, our organizations, representing major manufacturers and more than 1 million scientists, engineers, researchers and professionals, strongly endorse the "Aeronautics Research and Development Act of 2003."

In recent years, we have expressed concerns that reducing federal funding for aviation and aeronautics research and technology will jeopardize the nation's leadership in providing the technologies needed to develop the next generation aircraft, improve aviation safety and security, and attract the next generation of aerospace scientists and engineers. Assuring the nation's ability to develop advanced technologies for our air defense network is of paramount importance.

The November 2002 report of the Presidential Commission on the Future of the United States Aerospace Industry states, "The United States must maintain its preeminence in aerospace research and innovation to be a global aerospace leader in the 21st century," and that "Government policies and investments in long-term research have not kept pace with the changing world." The Commission report recommends that "the federal government significantly increase its investment in basic aerospace research, which enhances U.S. national security, enables breakthrough capabilities, and fosters an efficient, secure and safe aerospace transportation system" and that "the Administration and Congress work together to fund a new R&D initiative to develop a new 21st Century air transportation system for the nation."

According to a recent report on "The National Economic Impact of Civil Aviation," the total economic impact of civil aviation exceeded more than \$900 billion and 11 million jobs to the U.S. economy in the year 2000, roughly 9% of the total U.S. gross domestic product. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) and Federal

Aviation Administration's (FAA's) budget should reflect this by striving for a strong national commitment to aeronautical research. If the American public expects the U.S. aviation industry to continue to be the largest positive contributor to U.S. balance of trade, then we must have the ability to develop the next generation of aircraft that will enable it to compete internationally.

Over the last decade, funding for NASA's aeronautics research and development (R&D) program has fallen by approximately 50 percent, and unfortunately this trend is continuing. The "Aeronautics Research and Development Revitalization Act" will provide the necessary funding resources for NASA to compete with the European Union by implementing a program plan for their "Aeronautics Blueprint-Toward a Bold New Era of Aviation." We strongly support your efforts to counter the dramatic decline in U.S. research and development spending in aeronautics.

As we approach the centennial of the Wright Brother's first flight, it is more important than ever that America renew its national commitment to leadership in aviation. We commend you for your leadership in introducing this important legislation, and we look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress, in re-establishing the investment in aeronautics research and development as a national priority.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathryn Holmes at holmesk@asme.org or 202/785-3756, Ext. 390.

(Also sent to Rep. Larson)